Part III.—AROUND BAHRAIN.

MANAMA

361 THE capital of Bahrain, Manama, with a population, in 1950, of 39,648, is situated on the low lying coast at the north end of Bahrain Island. Most parts of the town are only two or three feet above sea level and close below the ground there is brackish water which accounts for the excessive humidity during the summer. The town extends for 1½ miles along the northern shore and about the same distance down the east coast. Although Manama, which means "The Place of [103] Sleeping." is known to have existed in the 15th century and is mentioned by the Portuguese, it contains no ancient buildings, and possibly the oldest relic of the past is the tomb of Shaikh Ahmed al-Khalifah, who conquered Bahrain in 1782, situated near the Awal Cinema.

The most attractive view of Manama is from the sea. Approaching the port from Saudi Arabia one sees a long line of tall, white houses with deep-shadowed verandahs, rising above the brilliantly coloured water. Around the Customs Pier, which extends for a quarter of a mile into the sea, there are usually 70 or 80 local sailing craft and launches whose crews and cargoes fill the pier to overflowing. The skyline of the town is broken by two or three minarets, the tallest being that of the Juma Mosque, while on the shore to the east of the town can be seen the graceful wind-towers which were used to catch the breeze before the days of electric fans and air-conditioning.

342 Most of the houses are built from coral stone, quarried from the bed of the sea at low tide, plastered and painted white. A noticeable feature of Bahrain architecture is the use of large flat sheets of coral stone set between masonry pillars in the walls of the houses. In some districts of the town there are still numbers of "barastis", huts made of palm branches, but these are rapidly being replaced by stone and cement houses.

361 The centre of the town is Shaikh Sulman Square with, on the north,
344 the Pier and the Customs premises and on the south "Bab al-Bahrain," the Gate of Bahrain, a large block of Government offices with an archway in the centre leading through to the principal street in the bazaar. In the centre of the Square is a circular garden, the walls of which are made from cement panels decorated with traditional Bahraini designs,
● 366 arabesques, of pleasing appearance. The bazaar extends for some
443 distance on each side of Barrett Road, the main street. To its west are the Municipal Buildings and an open market where, on Wednesday mornings, the people of the villages bring their produce to sell.

The Manama bazaar rightly claims to be the emporium of the Gulf, it contains both narrow streets of picturesque little shops, full

of colour and Arab life, and large modern stores stocked with every type of goods from America, Europe and the East. The spice bazaar, the second-hand bazaar behind the Municipality and the shops of the metal workers are typically oriental ; the stores in the larger streets with plate glass windows and fixed prices stock a wide range of modern goods which are generally cheaper than elsewhere in the Gulf owing to the low customs duty. Apart from pearls, mother-of-pearl, gold and silver thread embroidery and model dhows there are few purely local products for visitors to buy. The best way to see the bazaar is on foot, it provides innumerable subjects for photos and neither here nor anywhere else in Bahrain is there any objection to the taking of photos.

To the south-west of the town is the Qalat ad-Diwan, beyond it, along Awal Road, is the Isolation Hospital, the Public Health Department and a number of blocks of flats. Opposite them is a large garden with two miniature lakes, known as the Water Garden ; this is a popular place during summer evenings. Beyond the flats is the Mental Hospital. It is probable that within the next few years this area will undergo extensive development.

To the south-east is the district of Manama known as Quadabiya, up to a few years ago an area of barren sand and swamp land where mosquitos bred but which today is rapidly developing into a residential and entertainment centre. Going along Belgrave Road one passes the Secondary School and Hostel, the Palace and, where the road joins Jufair Road, many houses and bungalows occupied by employees of European commercial firms. Jufair Road then passes the Race Course and Gymkhana Club and terminates in the suburbs of Umm a-Hasan and Jufair ; at the latter are the headquarters of the Senior British Naval Officer, Persian Gulf and H.B.M.'s Political Residency.

In the modern districts of Manama there are many wide and well surfaced roads, lined with tree-shaded pavements, while here and there in the town waste plots of land have been made into little gardens with benches, lawns and fountains. Along the water-front runs Sea Road, joining the Muharraq Causeway with the State Hospital at its western end. The Muharraq Causeway took ten years to build, for it served as a relief project when there was unemployment in Bahrain. The Shaikh Hamed Swing Bridge was completed in 1942 by Messrs. Holloways Bros. Many of the principal buildings and offices in Bahrain are on the Sea Road and Prior Road, which is an inland road running parallel to it. In former times the sea extended far into the town, south even of Prior Road, but during the past twenty-five years much of the sea-shore has been reclaimed. In Muharraq similar work can be seen in progress, but in an earlier stage of development.

In the evenings, the busiest part of Manama is Belgrave Road and the part of Quadabiya to its east where there are four cinemas and many coffee-shops, as well as football fields. At sunset the people of the town can be seen strolling along the road to Jufair, or sitting on the benches that line the pavements, later returning to the cinemas

204 In addition to the English language papers published in Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt, many English and American papers have airmail editions, which take a very short time in reaching Bahrain. Other papers and magazines are on sale in the Manama shops, both American and English, but they take rather longer to arrive. It is possible to receive the *Irak Times* by air, and also numerous Arabic papers from Egypt and Lebanon.

217 There is a public library in Bahrain, the Library of the Education Department, in Shaikh Abdulla Road, which contains Arabic and English books and magazines. There is a subscription library of English fiction and non-fiction at the Residency, Jufair and also libraries in many of the clubs. The largest library in Bahrain is that of the Bapco Club. Some Manama shops have large selections of books and one of them specialises in new books on Middle Eastern topics and stocks them soon after their publication.

CLOTHING (EUROPEAN)

291 Men in the summer wear shirts and slacks or shorts and light tropical suits on formal occasions. In the evening white opened-necked and short sleeved shirts and white trousers are usual, with black shoes and socks and a black cummerbund at more formal affairs. Aertex or similar day shirts are the most suitable form of wear and cellular vests are useful, not for warmth but to absorb sweat. All forms of clothing for summer wear in Bahrain can be bought in Manama, both ready made and tailored.

In cold weather ordinary tweed suits are worn, or flannel trousers and sports coats and dinner jackets in the evening. It is cold enough for pullovers and overcoats, especially after sunset.

Washing frocks, preferably cotton, are the best wear for women in the very hot weather, as linen or silk are unsuitable when the temperature and humidity are high. Light frocks are usually worn from April till December. Hats are worn on rare occasions. Cotton dress materials can be obtained locally as well as ready made English and American frocks.

In the cold season women require the type of clothing which is worn in England in April and May, and in the Fall in the States. In addition, the cold winter winds call for a really warm coat. As with summer clothes, those needed in the winter can be made in Manama from locally purchased material.

HOTELS

485 366 There are only two hotels in Bahrain attaining European standards, the B.O.A.C. Guest House and the Bahrain Hotel. The former is primarily built for the benefit of transit passengers and it is often difficult for visitors to Bahrain who expect to stay for some time to get a room there. The Bahrain Hotel, which is at the west end of Prior Road, offers good food and is in fact the only alternative to the B.O.A.C. Guest House. There are a number of small local hotels which are not in the same class as these two.